

CHOOSING A DOCTOR FOR YOUR BABY

During the first year of your baby's life you will be visiting the doctor's office six times for routine well-baby visits alone. It is important that you find a doctor with whom you feel comfortable. Ideally, you should make the important decision about who will provide your baby's medical care while you are pregnant. With all the physical changes and excitement of pregnancy it is easy to forget the coming transition to parenthood. Making a decision before delivery allows you to make a well informed unhurried choice. You should begin collecting a list of potential doctors about four months before your baby is due.



What kind of doctor should I look for?

Some parents take their baby to a pediatrician, a doctor who specializes in the care of children. Pediatricians have expertise in children's medical issues. Other parents prefer a family practitioner, a doctor specializing in family medicine who can treat the whole family, from birth to old age. Either type of doctor is fine. What is most important is that you feel comfortable with the doctor you choose and confident he or she can provide high quality healthcare.

How do I find a doctor?

Your insurance company can give you information on which doctors are within their network. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) offers referrals to AAP certified doctors on its website www.aap.org/referral/. Certification by the AAP means that the doctor has graduated from an accredited medical school, completed an accredited residency program, and passed the board exam in pediatrics. You can also get recommendations from your doctor or midwife as well as friends, family, neighbors or co-workers.



If you need additional information, contact the Family Health Line at 1-800-451-BABY (2229)

What kinds of questions should I ask?

Once you have a list of candidates make sure they fit your basic criteria.

- Have you checked with the state medical board to find out whether any doctor you're interested in has been disciplined for wrongdoing?
- Is the office close to your home or workplace?
- Are they taking new patients?
- Will they accept your health insurance?
- Does the doctor have convenient locations and office hours?
- Is the doctor affiliated with a hospital?

How do you make a final decision?

Plan to visit the office and do an interview with the doctor before making a final decision.

- Is the office clean? Is there a separate waiting area for "sick" and "well" kids?
- Is the office staff warm and friendly? Do they answer your questions and discuss your concerns?
- Is the doctor sincere and professional?
- Will the doctor you interview or someone else in the practice see your newborn in the hospital? Will the first contact be an office visit?
- Is the doctor available by phone or email? Is there an after-hours answering service?
- How long does it take to get an appointment? What is the wait time once you get to the office?
- Will the doctor you interview actually be the one who sees your child during office visits?
- Do you agree with the doctor's views on breastfeeding, vaccinations or sleep environment?

Finding a doctor for your baby is not always an easy task. Don't just choose the first doctor you meet or who is recommend to you. Interview a few candidates. A family's relationship with its doctor can be lasting and rewarding. It's important to locate a pediatrician that makes you and your family feel at ease.



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